

REMARKS

Applicants respectfully request that the foregoing amendments be entered at least because the amendments raise no new issues requiring further search or consideration.

Claim 1 is currently being amended to include the limitations of claim 2, which has been cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer. Claims 1 and 3-9 remain pending in this application.

Drawings

The drawings were objected to. The Office Action states that the load port door 12 and the shield door 7 have both been used to designate the doors in Figure 1. Applicants note that reference numerals 12 and 7 designate different doors in Figure 1. In Figure 1, the shield doors 7 are in the front portion of the shield plate. On the other hand, the load port doors 12, are the doors to the substrate processing apparatus 2 of Figure 1 to allow wafers to be brought in and out of the substrate processing apparatus (see instant specification, page 8, first paragraph after the Detailed Description of the Preferred Embodiments, and page 9, second paragraph). Thus, the drawings illustrate the location of both shield and load port doors.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. §§ 102 and 103

Claims 1, 5 and 6 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Japan 5-338743 A (hereafter "JP '743"). Claims 1-9 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Figure 2 (alleged admitted prior art "AAPA") in view of JP '743.

Applicants respectfully traverse these rejections for at least the following reasons.

Independent claim 1 has been amended to include a conveyer means that brings the wafer carrier in and out of the load port table by ascending and descending the wafer carrier within a region surrounded by said shield plate. Neither JP '743 nor the AAPA disclose a conveyor mean that brings a wafer carrier in and out of a load port table by ascending and descending the wafer carrier within a region surrounded by said shield plate. Claim 1 is patentable for at least this reason.

Further, independent claims 1, 5 and 6, each comprise a load port table on which a wafer carrier that accommodates a plurality of substrates at the front of a load port door, a shield plate provided so as to surround the load port table, and a shield door that can be opened or closed provided on the shield plate. JP '743 fails to disclose at least a shield door on a shield plate as recited in claims 1, 5 and 6.

JP '743 discloses a device including a door body 27 that rotates through the application of a handle 28 (see abstract). In JP '743, the door body 27 appears to have the shape of a quarter cylinder (comprising the cover plate 26 and the plate 25), and may be rotated between two positions by means of the handle 28.

In contrast to claims 1, 5 and 6, however, the door body 27 of JP '743 does not appear to be on a shield plate that surrounds a load port table. Instead, the door body 27 is within a portion of the structure of the JP '743 device, and blocks access to one side or the other by rotating the quarter cylinder shaped door body to one position or the other.

Independent claim 7 is directed to a method for conveying substrates and recites that the shield door (where a shield plate comprises the shield door) is maintained in a closed state thereof when a wafer carrier is brought in or out of the load port table using a conveyer means. As discussed above, JP '743 fails to disclose a shield door on a shield plate. Thus, JP '743 fails to anticipate claim 7.

Figure 2 of the AAPA fails to cure the deficiencies of JP '743. The device of Figure 2 neither discloses a shield plate, nor a shield door on a shield plate. Thus, even if Figure 2 of the AAPA were combined with JP '743, the combination would fail to suggest the invention as claimed in claims 1, 5, 6 or 7.

For at least the reasons given above, applicants submit that claims 1 and 5-7 are patentable over JP '743 and the AAPA of Figure 2, and request that the rejections under 35 U.S.C. 102 and 103 be withdrawn. Dependent claims 3-4, 8 and 9 depend from one of claims 1 and 7 and are patentable for at least the same reasons, as well as for further patentable features recited therein.

For example, dependent claim 3 recites a lock mechanism for holding the shield door in a closed state, wherein the shield door is maintained in the closed state thereof by making the lock mechanism function when the wafer carrier is brought in and out of the load port table by the conveyer means. JP '743 and the AAPA fail to disclose a lock mechanism as recited in claim 3.

Dependent claim 4 recites that the shield door is maintained in the closed state thereof when the wafer carrier brought from another processing apparatus arrives above the load port table. JP '743 and the AAPA fail to disclose this feature of claim 4.

Applicants believe that the present application is now in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration of the application as amended is respectfully requested.

The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned by telephone if it is felt that a telephone interview would advance the prosecution of the present application.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees which may be required regarding this application under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16-1.17, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 19-0741. Should no proper payment be enclosed herewith, as by a check being in the wrong amount, unsigned, post-dated, otherwise improper or informal or even entirely missing, the Commissioner is authorized to charge the unpaid amount to Deposit Account No. 19-0741. If any extensions of time are needed for timely acceptance of papers submitted herewith, Applicant hereby petitions for such extension under 37 C.F.R. §1.136 and authorizes payment of any such extensions fees to Deposit Account No. 19-0741.

Respectfully submitted,

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